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SUBJECT: UN COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH THE HOST COUNTRY

¶1. SUMMARY: The Committee heard a chorus of complaints, including from the Cypriot Chairman, re parking tickets issued to chauffeurs picking up UN Perm Reps at their residences. Delegates appealed to the Host Country for a solution so missions could carry out their normal duties. Secondary screenings for diplomats departing NYC area airports, taxes on gasoline company credit card bills, and DOS drivers' licensees for non-diplomats were also raised. END SUMMARY.

#### DIPLOMATIC PARKING

¶2. The UN Committee on Relations with the Host Country held its 241st meeting on March 12, 2009. France took the floor and described as "almost harassment" the frequency with which its Perm Rep's chauffeur has been receiving tickets while picking up the Ambassador from his residence. Additionally, tickets were not given to the driver but mailed to the French Mission later. The GOF requested that the Host Country find a solution to this problem so that the mission could fulfill its duties in a normal way, and suggested establishing parking at the Perm Rep's residence on Park Avenue.

¶3. Russia highlighted its consistent complaints, since the Parking Program's establishment, that the program was not in line with diplomatic norms. The delegate noted the 2002 UN Legal Adviser's opinion which raised concerns re its implementation. Russia also cited local media reports that NYC authorities had increased issuance of parking tickets as a way to solve NYC's financial problems and said that, if true, this was unacceptable.

¶4. The Cyprus delegate said her Ambassador's driver was also frequently ticketed for double-parking when picking up the Ambassador at his residence. She complained that the traffic agent appeared to lie in wait for the vehicle each morning. She also sought a solution from the Host Country. Cypriot Chairman AMB Hadjimichael, speaking from the podium, added his personal account of tickets issued in this manner.

¶5. Bulgaria and Mongolia similarly complained of parking tickets not given to drivers at the time of issuance but mailed to the missions later. The Bulgarians asked if this was legal and the Mongolians complained that parking tickets issued to drivers performing their duties were not dismissed when contested.

#### USUN and NYC Response

¶6. USUN/HC MinCouns took note of the concerns and said that he would discuss the matter with the City. He reminded Missions that the 2002 Parking Program provide parking spaces in close proximity to each UN Mission office but the City could not provide street parking at official residences, for a variety of reasons, particularly on main traffic arteries

such as Park Avenue where parking is prohibited. Under the 2002 Parking Program, the City removed residential parking spaces to provide parking at the 191 UN Missions' offices. USDEL said that USUN had not noticed any major increase in the number of parking tickers issued and outstanding and cautioned members of the diplomatic community from placing much credibility in press reports that the City of New York has begun, in a systematic way, to increase the number of parking tickets issued to the public as a way to increase municipal revenue. NYC Commissioner for the UN, Marjorie Bloomberg Tiven, said that it was the first she was hearing of these problems and she suggested that Missions call her office when such matters arose so the City could respond.

#### OTHER MATTERS

¶7. China again complained that gasoline company credit cards still were not deducting sales tax from monthly bills. USUN Del informed the Committee that New York State legislation had reinstated a process for tax deductions but not every oil company was on board yet with the procedures. He said DOS was working with Citigroup, the card issuer for several of the major U.S. gas companies, and was hopeful the matter would be resolved soon. China restated its complaint re OFM's rules prohibiting non-diplomats from receiving DOS drivers' licenses. USUN replied that OFM offers assistance to Missions having difficulties obtaining state-issued drivers' permits.

¶8. Libya asked for an explanation of the quadruple "S" notation on airplane boarding passes which selects individuals for secondary pre-boarding screening. Iran questioned why diplomats from certain countries were singled

out for secondary screening. USDEL responded that the selection criteria were confidential for national and passenger security reasons. USDEL reminded the Committee that USUN had circulated a diplomatic note explaining that diplomats could seek out TSA supervisors for special courtesies. The Iranian delegate said this process was ineffective. USDEL requested that diplomats experiencing difficulties contact his office immediately so that problems could be addressed.

¶9. Comment: Following the meeting, NYC Commissioner Tiven said she had taken detailed notes on the diplomatic parking complaints. She said her office had extended itself to assist Cyprus in the past and was surprised at the statements made in the Committee. The Russian's unflattering interventions on parking may have been particularly untimely, since they have been appealing for months for NYC to install special "No Parking" signs at their recently acquired Ambassador's residence. The Department recently wrote to the Commissioner to support the Russian request.  
Wolff